Educator Guide: Truth or Myth Activity

Recommended for Grades:

7th grade

Time:

4 minutes

National Health Education Standards:

This activity aligns with the following National Health Education Standards:

- Standard 1: Use functional health information to support health and well-being of self and others.
- Standard 3: Access valid and reliable resources to support health and well-being of self and others.
- Standard 7: Demonstrate practices and behaviors to support health and well-being of self and others.

For more information about the National Health Education Standards, visit the SHAPE America website: shapeamerica.org.

Learning Objectives:

After completing this activity students will be able to:

1. Describe two ways to show empathy and support for others.
2. Correct and explain one myth about mental health or mental illness.

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Activity Description:

In this activity, students will practice determining what is the truth and what is a myth when given a statement about mental health or mental illness. There are a lot of myths around mental health and mental illness, which can lead to stigma. Stigma can then lead to teens and adults not seeking the help they may need. This activity provides an opportunity for students to learn the truth about this important topic. They do not need to know all the answers. If they're unsure, they can take their best guess.

** This activity may bring up sensitive topics for some students. Please be aware that everyone has had different experiences and may react differently when learning about mental health and mental illness. Please allow students to take a break, if needed, at any point during the activity.

Pre and Post-Test Questions:

Use the following questions with your students in any way that you see fit (on paper, using a survey tool etc.) You may choose to combine questions from various lessons and activities that your students participate in.

1. If you are having mental health challenges or concerns will you ask for help?
   A. Yes
   B. Maybe
   C. No

2. How comfortable are you around someone who has a mental illness?
   A. Very comfortable
   B. Somewhat comfortable
   C. Not comfortable at all

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Vocabulary:

Use the following list of vocabulary as a reference for yourself and your students as you complete the Truth or Myth Activity. You may choose to use this list in any way that fits your needs. Students will also see some of these vocabulary words underlined right in the lesson. They can click on the underlined word and a definition will appear.

- Cancer – a disease where abnormal cells divide uncontrollably and destroy body tissue
- Contagious – spreads from person to person by direct or indirect contact
- Diabetes – a chronic metabolic disease that occurs when the body doesn't produce enough insulin or can't use insulin properly, resulting in high blood sugar levels
- Heart disease – a type of disease that affects the heart or blood vessels
- Mental health – a person's emotional, psychological and social well-being
- Mental health professional – a health care practitioner or other provider who has education and training in mental health and offers services to improve a person's mental health
- Mental illness – a health condition involving changes in emotion, thinking or behavior
- Myth – a widely held but false belief or idea
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – a disorder that develops when a person has experienced a deeply disturbing event or series of events
- Trauma – a deeply disturbing event or series of events

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Supplemental Activity: Debunking Mental Health Myths

Objectives:

After completing this activity students will be able to:

- Recognize the difference between the truth and common myths around mental health and mental illness.

Materials Needed:

- Whiteboard or SMART board

Time Required:

60 minutes

Instructions:

Have a class discussion around common myths that students hear about mental health and mental illness. Encourage students to think about things they have seen or heard in movies, TV shows, music videos, on social media, etc. If students are struggling to come up with common myths try doing a simple search of “mental health myths” online. Write down the list of myths on a whiteboard or SMART board.

Students can work individually or in small groups to de-bunk the myths. Remind students to use reputable sources to gather their information. There is a list of resources later in this guide that you may find helpful. As time allows, students can share their findings with the class.

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Handouts

Included on the following pages are additional resources that you and your students' families may find useful.

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Mental and Emotional Health Resources

- 988 Lifeline, 988lifeline.org, call or text 988
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America, adaa.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/
- Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, chadd.org
- Children's Wisconsin, childrenswi.org/find-care/mental-behavioral-health
- KidsHealth, kidshealth.org
- Mental Health America, mhanational.org
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), nami.org
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), nimh.nih.gov
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (Student Services/Prevention and Wellness), dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health

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Transcript

Introduction

Unfortunately there are a lot of myths about mental health and mental illness, which makes it really hard to figure out what's true and what's not. Let's see if you can tell the difference between a myth and the truth. If you're not sure, take your best guess.

Truth/Myth 1

People with mental illness are violent and dangerous.
Truth or Myth?

> *Truth:* Sorry, but that's a myth. The truth is most people with mental illness are not violent. In fact, people with severe mental illness are more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population. There's no reason to fear a person with mental illness just because of their diagnosis.
>
> *Myth:* That's right! Most people with mental illness are not violent. In fact, people with severe mental illness are more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population. There's no reason to fear a person with mental illness just because of their diagnosis.

Truth/Myth 2

You can help a friend or family member who's having mental health challenges even if you're not a mental health professional.
Truth or Myth?

> *Truth:* That's right! You don't need to work in mental health to help a friend or family member. You can support them by letting them know you care and helping them find the mental health services they may need.
>
> *Myth:* Nope, that's actually true! You don't need to work in mental health to help a friend or family member. You can support them by letting them know you care and helping them find the mental health services they may need.

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Truth/Myth 3
There is no hope for people with mental health challenges.
Truth or Myth?

Truth: That's not true. There is definitely hope. There are treatments, services, and community support systems that can really help.

Myth: That's right. There is definitely hope. There are treatments, services, and community support systems that can really help.

Truth/Myth 4
Someone who has a mental illness is "crazy".
Truth or Myth?

Truth: Actually, that's a myth. Someone who has a mental illness has an illness with challenging symptoms — similar to someone with an illness like diabetes, cancer, or heart disease. While mental illness might affect a person's thinking, their moods, or sense of reality, that does not mean that they are "crazy."

Myth: That's right! Having a mental illness does not make a person "crazy". It means the person has an illness with challenging symptoms— similar to someone with an illness like diabetes, cancer, or heart disease. While mental illness might affect a person's thinking, their moods, or their sense of reality, that does not mean that they are "crazy."

Truth/Myth 5
Anyone who has experienced trauma could develop post-traumatic stress disorder, commonly known as PTSD.
Truth or Myth?

Truth: That's correct. Anyone who experiences trauma could develop PTSD. Trauma can include abuse, suffering a loss, being a victim of violence, witnessing violence, or anything else that is emotionally disturbing or distressing.

Myth: Actually, that's true. Anyone who experiences trauma could develop PTSD. Trauma can include abuse, suffering a loss, being a victim of violence, witnessing violence, or anything else that is emotionally disturbing or distressing.

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Truth/Myth 6
Some mental illnesses are contagious.
Truth or Myth?

> *Truth:* That's actually a myth. For an illness to be contagious it's spread from one person to another by direct or indirect contact. Mental illness does NOT spread from person to person. You can't "catch" it from someone.
>
> *Myth:* That's right! For an illness to be contagious it's spread from one person to another by direct or indirect contact. Mental illness does NOT spread from person to person. You can't "catch" it from someone.

Truth/Myth 7
Asking for help with your mental health is a sign of weakness.
Truth or Myth?

> *Truth:* That is absolutely a myth. Asking for help is a sign of courage and strength.
>
> *Myth:* That's right! Asking for help is a sign of courage and strength, not a sign of weakness.

Conclusion
Hopefully that helped clear up some confusion around mental health. If you're ever unsure whether something you hear is true or not, make sure you get your information from valid and reliable sources. Just because you hear something on social media, or from others around you, doesn't mean it's true.

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